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JUSTICE FOR ODAG, OPDAT, ICITAP, CRM

STATE FOR NEA/I, INL/I

TAGS: KJUS PGOV IZ PTER

SUBJECT: With Help from the FBI, Iraqi Ministry of Interior Holds Inaugural Citizens' Academy

REF: 09 State 19846

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: On January 24, 2010, the Ministry of Interior's National Information and Investigation Agency (NIIA) held its first Citizens' Academy in Baghdad for approximately twenty-five Iraqis, including private citizens, religious leaders, and government officials. Modeled after the successful FBI Citizen's Academy, used nationwide in the United States, the full-day program provides a forum for invited guests to meet with law enforcement professionals to discuss how they can work together for a safer community. The Citizens' Academy is funded through an S/CT Ambassador's Fund for Counterterrorism grant. End Summary.

¶2. (SBU) The FBI Legal Attach's Office, in concert with the Embassy's Office of the Rule of Law Coordinator, assisted NIIA in establishing the Citizens' Academy to improve relations between the agency and investigators and the diverse community it serves. NIIA's investigative function within the MOI is very similar to the FBI. The Citizens' Academy was implemented to remove obstacles and create an atmosphere of mutual trust in which the community is less fearful of law enforcement and has a better understanding of its mission, authorities, and intent to protect the citizens of Iraq.

¶3. (SBU) For the first session, NIIA selected invitees from various sectors of the community including tribal sheiks, religious leaders, university professionals, private citizens, and GOI officials. The guests received an organizational overview of NIIA along with presentations on stability within the various communities delivered by approximately fifteen NIIA officers. NIIA encouraged the guests to participate in an open dialogue and interaction with the attending officers. Several participants noted that the Citizens' Academy was truly an opportunity for an Iraqi citizen to sit with investigators and intelligence officers to explore common goals that would never have been contemplated in the past. One of two Catholic priests in attendance used the occasion to criticize NIIA's lackluster response posture for large-scale violent incidents against Iraq's Christian population. The Christian population in Iraq, though small, is often overlooked by GOI agencies, including NIIA, and that its response to attacks on Christians is not equal to the response to attacks on the Sunni and Shi'a populations, the priest argued.

¶4. (SBU) S/CT funded the Citizens' Academy program through a one year \$100,000 grant from the FY2009 Ambassador's Fund for Counterterrorism. The program aims to show members of the public how intelligence and criminal investigations of terrorism-related crimes can be accomplished within the rule of law, through demonstration of NIIA training procedures, public interaction with

counterterrorist intelligence analysts and criminal investigators, and hands-on simulations of investigations.

¶15. (SBU) The next session of the Citizens' Academy is scheduled for March 2010, with future sessions scheduled every other month. NIIA will continue to adjust the relevant topics covered during each session and the target audience based on the feedback from attendees. Yet to be determined is whether NIIA will continue the program on the conclusion of the S/CT grant. NIIA is waiting to assess the results of the Academy over several iterations before deciding whether to continue the program after the S/CT grant expires.

¶16. (SBU) Comment: Similar to the FBI Citizen's Academy, attendees were encouraged to work together, discuss their successes and shortcomings, and proceed toward a mutually supportive relationship. The first NIIA Citizens' Academy was a success in bringing citizens of Iraq together to discuss their common goal; safety and security in their neighborhoods. This is greatly attributed to NIIA's willingness to receive public criticism and input. End Comment.